

# REASONS Why all Good CHRISTIANS

## Holy Fast of Lent.

Extraction out of my Lord of Ely's Physical Fight.

**T**HIS SACRED PENITENTIAL TIME OF LENT is at hand. What shall I do? I shall take notice of it, or no? If I take no notice of it, Mr. Hikkens will kick me as a black boy; and if I do, Mr. Gaze will examine me as a Popish inquisitor. O Times! O Manners! Unhappy Age in which we live! Different Dives of vicious and impudent places? God has forsaken the bones of those who please Men. If I fail to please Men, or fear to offend them, I am no longer an honourable Servant of Jesus Christ, but a base Slave of the Devil World. If I christially observe this Sacred Time, my own Conscience, I venture, will applaud me, whatsoever my Neighbours may say or think of me. And a good Conscience, even when it dictates Fasting and Abstinence, is a continual Feast. But will not the Holy Gospel say, I am superstitious? God forbid! I know they are the words of our Beloved Lord himself, Matthew 15. *No man can void the mouth, and void his heart; for what comes out of the mouth, that defileth a man.* And surely had our great Master spoken those words, when it was objected to him by the Disciples of St. John, that they and the Pharisees failed often? But consulting the Sacred Text, I find he is so far from oppressing the holy Discipline of Fasting, by laying *No man voideth his mouth*, as he explicitly commends it, as a Duty too sublime for such Novices in Religion as his Apostles; is yet weak, but the time would come when they should fail, to wit, after he shall have been taken away from them.

them, and shall have strengthen'd them for so hard and necessary a Duty, by a plentiful edition of the Holy-Ghost upon them. The new Wine of rigorous Abstinence, and Fasting, is too strong for the frail Bodies of our Lord's Disciples, before their Confirmation from the Holy-Ghost; upon the day of Pentecost. But can there be, which goes, into my mouth, before me? Yes, when least or brimmin contente of the equitable and just command of my lawful Superior, Ecclesiastical or Civil. Though strictly speaking, it is not the Meat then which defiles me, but my disobedience to my Superior.

Not to engage in long Disputes: For these Reasons methinks every good Christian ought Religiously to observe the Holy Fast of Lent.

Because Fasting in it selfe has ever beene looked upon by all Christians as a Christian Duty, and is not only highly commended by all the ancient Fathers of the most Primitive Church, also by the Holy Scripture it selfe, as having a singular Power to drive out the Devil: *This Devil goes not out but by Fasting*. To obtaine the Holy Ghost for our selves or others: That so, As it is said in psalm, that the Holy Ghost might descend upon those on whom they conferred Holy Orders. To avert God's anger from a particular Person, City, or Country. It has Alas! and the Name of it, evoketh the wrath of the Almighty! To impetrall Concurrence; to dispose the Mind for Prayer; to encrease all Virtues in us in this Life, and our Crown of Glory in the other. If we fast in a due manner, we have our Blessed Saviour's words for it, that we shall have Reward in Heaven. If I fast, to afflict and humble my self before God Almighty, now say, my Fasting is an Act of Repentance. If I cast away my self, that I may have more to give to those that are in need, my Fasting is an act of Charity. If I fast, the better to dispose my self for Prayer, 'tis an act of Religious Devotion. If I fast, judging my self not worthy of any Dainties, nor of my full of even the poorest Fare, 'tis an act of Humility, and disposes my Soul moreovery as little to affect fine Clother or commodeous Lodgings, as I do good Viseals, and consequently moderates my desires of Money and Riches; which are not desirable by corrupt Nature, but for these or such-like uses. If I fast, that I may be better able to pay my Debts, or provide my Children's Portions, 'tis an act of Justice, and Christian Paternal Piety. If to moderate my inordinate Appetite of Meat and Drink, 'tis an act of Temperance; and strangely disposes no Temperance in the whole course of my life, when by experience I find my self as cheerful and contented, or rather more, upon a fasting day, than when I indulge so much in eating and drinking. In fine, we had to name a Virtue which fasting does not strangely help to procure, maintain, and encrease. As for the four Cardinal Virtues, 'tis the formal exercize of the highest degree of Temperance, as is Fortitude less seen in abstaining from what pleases us, than in sustining what afflicts us. It makes Justice alive, and is the Mother of wise and sober Thoughts. It moderates our Passions, increases our Understanding, and makes us more fit for Conemplation of Natural or Supernatural Verities. O Angelical Abstinence!

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Making I could be incorporate in thy Praife,  
and fangle her with ſug or dittys, and Roundays. D.O.

2. Fasting then being of so singular use in a Christian life, and Experience telling us, That those who fast only, when they please, are prone to fast very seldom, or not at all; our Spiritual Prelates, who watch over our Souls good, can do no less than oblige us by a Law to fast some times, nor we do no less than Religiously observe their equitable Commandments.

3. I have all reason to think, the Holy Fast of Lent was first appointed by the Holy Apostles themselves, and consequently ought to be Religiously observed by all good Christians. Now that the Holy Fast of Lent was appointed by the Apostles, methinks may be proved thus: Two hundred years ago England, France, Spain, Germany, Italy, and all the Eastern Churches, universally kept Lent, as is evident by the Records and Annals of our own, and more other Christian Countries. There are the Apostles taught Lent to their first Converts, both in the Eastern and Western World where they preached: For it cannot be imagined, that in many several Countries, Kings and Subjects, Priests and People, could by chance fall upon the yearly practice of abstaining from Flesh 40 days before Easter: Therefore they must either all at first be taught so by their first Masters of Christianity, which is the Conclusion intended to be proved, or some universal Supreme Authority, Ecclesiastical or Civil, must have commanded them to do; or some Preachers, full in one Country, and then in another, must so have persuaded them to do in some Age since. But in Annals of our own, or other Christian Countries, make any mention of any such Preachers, or any such Ordination made by any General Council, Pope, Prince, or Emperour: Nor yet have we, or any other Christian Countries, wanted Ecclesiastical Historiographers, who in their Memoriae have taken notice of far lesser matters than such an Innovation as this must needs have been, had the Apostles taught the World no such observance. And the truth is, 'tis pure Ignorance in Ecclesiastical History, and the Works of the Primitive Fathers, that makes so many waver in the Belief of the Apostolical Institution of Lent; in which, if they were well converted, they could not possibly doubt of it.

Further: Not only two hundred years ago, but twelve hundred years ago, Lent was universally observed in the whole Christian World, both in the Eastern and Western Church, as is manifest out of the pious Works of the prime Pillars and Pastors of Christ's Church, in the fourth and fifth Century of Christianity. Nor do the opposers of Lent deny so much, and therefore appeal to the first 300 years after our Saviour; for which time, and which only, they pretend the Christian Worship was untaught, and not infected with the superstitious Observation of Lent. Let us suppose then, that for the first 300 years of Christianity, the Church of Christ is

England, Italy, Greece, and other Countries, observed no such thing as *Lent-Past*, and consider by what means possible, the fourth Age could not only bring it in all over the Christian World, but bring it in so secretly or covertly, that the prime Doctors of the fifth Age should not be able to discern, that this new Burden was superadded to Christianity by their immediate Progenitors, but should be verily persuaded, that such an Observation had immortally from Generation to Generation descended to them from the first Ministers of Christianity, the Apostles. And yet it is evident, that the fifth Age did not only keep *Lent*, but also kept it as an Apostolical Institution, and the prime Christian Doctors of that Age have left it upon Record, in their deservedly admired Works, that they kept this *Holy Fast* as an observance taught them by Tradition from the Apostles. Hear their own words, &c. *Hinc*, in his Epistle to *Marsella*: *We fast one Lent* (*Quare diequum*) *whether for compass of a whole year*, according to the Traditions of the Apostles, in a Season fit for us. *The Monasteries keep Lent in the year*, as if *Three Seasons* had suffered. Now if for the last 300 years there had been no such observance by Christians at *Rome*, but if in the fourth Century some Bishop of *Rome*, or some Provincial or General Council, or Christian Emperor, had first introduced it, could a Learned Priest of *Rome* of the fifth Age, and one well versed in all Ecclesiastical matters, as St. *Ambrosius* was, not be grossly in to mistake so new an Institution for an Apostolical Tradition, that is, for an observance taught the City of *Rome*, from Father to Son, from the Apostles. For the Greek Church, hear the Testimony of *Theophylact*, Patriarch of *Alexandria*, (to the Patriarchs of which See, it was intrusted by the first General Council, That they should yearly signify by *Decretum*, to the rest of the Churches, as well as their own, the true time of *Easter*). In his first *Paschal Epistle*, he writes thus: *Let us cure all disorders-wounds of Vice*, &c. *And so may we enter the Easter at hand, beginning Lent the 30th day of the month Mechir*, (as it were our February, the Egyptian reckoning 30 days in every month.) *The week of the Solitary People*, on the *5th day of the month Pharmuth* (or April), *and ending the Fast*, according to the Evangelical Traditions on the evening of the Saturday, being *the month of Pharmuth*, *and so the next Lord's day*, the *11th of the same month*, *let us celebrate the Pascha*. The like he lays in his second *Paschal Epistle*, and again he says according to the Evangelical Traditions, I add the Testimony of S. *Cyril*, Patriarch of the same *Alexandria*, in the next Age, in his *2nd Homily*, *De Fasting Paschalium*, *Sicut uero apud Past*, *beginning the Holy Lent from such a day*, *ending also the Fast* on the *7th day of Pharmuth*, *late in the Evening*, according to the Traditions Apostolical. The same S. *Cyril*, in nineteen other of his Homilies, cited by B. *Gusmung*, in his *De Fasting Paschalium*, (preached in so many several years) refers the same Fast of *Lent* to Tradition, Appointment, or Instruction Evangelical. The *Law of abstinence in Lent*, may appear in the Church, says the above-cited *Theophylact Alexandria*. Now can it be imagined, that these two Learned Patriarchs, (to whom by the whole Christian Church was committed the care of signifying the due time,

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time of Zion and Ephesus) had the MoM Part of Zion been so lately brought  
into Gods Universal Ecclesiastical or Civil Authority, would he ignorant of  
the end and mind and all the World also, that they had been so taught  
and Lured from Generation to Generation from the Apostles? Note also,  
wherefore Lent is observed, the Observers of it profess from Generation  
to Generation to have observed it, from the first planting of Christianity  
amongst them; nor does any of their Authors Ecclesiastical or Civil, make  
any mention of a later institution of it; and to this, in which the Holy Apostles  
had appointed Zion by Oral teaching, what other Arguments could we  
have had for its Apostolical Institution?

But if a yearly Religious Observation of the Holy fast of Lent be of  
such singular benefit and spiritual advantage to all Christians; and of also  
such a service of our Lord Jesus Christ did recommend such an Observance  
to the several Countries by them converted to the Christian Name, how  
wonderful to pose that none of all their Writings which have come to our  
hands, makes express mention of it? Hear Bishop Gunning, p. 133. *Christian Observances being visible, and that were known to the author of Church's can-  
onic practice, made known to be peculiar to his own Rite.* Of which the  
Bishop says, now, not merely accidentally, but very likely he had the inter-  
pretation of such like Observances practice. And indeed, whence will I impa-  
tiently consider the nature of the Books of the New Testament, will be so far  
from wondering, that all the Rituals of Christianity are not expressly de-  
clared in them, that he will rather wonder there is so much in them of the  
exterior Rites of Christian Religion as there is. Had any of the Sacred  
Christian Authors written Book, on purpose to declare the whole manner  
of Christian Worship, like *Paul*, his *Epistles of Corinth*, we might rea-  
sonably have expected an account, what days Christians were to set apart  
for Fasting or Religious Fasting, what Garments they were to use in time  
of Divine Worship, &c. But they only, as is manifest, writing Books for  
other intents and purposes, by way of History, for example, or moral Ex-  
hortation, and making mention only by the by of some of our Christian  
Rites, as they occur by nothing can be more unavoidable than to expect  
in their said Writings an express clear mention of every Christian Ceremo-  
nial Observance. And why St. Paul, or other of the Apostles, should make  
mention of Lent in the Epistles they wrote to persons already instructed in  
the Christian Faith, I understand not, unless perchance the persons they  
wrote unto, had been deficient in observing it.

Further: What though the Holy Apostles did not first institute the  
*Lent Fast*, but to grew by little and little from the pious observation of  
some particular Christians into an universal Practice, ought not the univer-  
sal Practice of the whole Christian Church, both Eastern and Western, of  
above twelve hundred years continuall, to have more weight with us, than  
the Non conformity of a few Mormon Christians, springing up in the night  
of this last Age? Besides, we are commanded by our Civil and Ecclesiasti-  
cal Superiors assembled in Parliament, to fast Lent upon a Religious ac-  
count, by an Act never yet repealed; which the Statute, 2 & 31 of Eliz. 6.

THE 16. Of a Sabbath day before the Kings Subject have of late time, and others in  
time past, eaten and drunken such Abominations, which has been used in this  
dominion, in Friday and Saturday, the Easter-day, and other days, con-  
sequently, and Vights, and in the time commonly called Lent, and other accustomed  
Times, the King: Mistris considering that the meedgedly Abstinence is a means  
to keep the body from sinning, and to bring to their Soul and Spirit, and comfortable  
ing their bodies, the both Ordaine and Chast, with the assent of the Lords  
Temporal and spiritual, 1653. That no person or persons, of what Estate, Degree,  
or Condition he or they be, shall at any time after the Easter-day of May, 1649.  
willingly or unwillingly eat any manner of Flesh upon any Friday or Saturday,  
in the former days, or on any day in the time commonly called Lent.

Moreover it shal be not to be oblidged, upon a Religious account,  
to the most of God what does it in the Liturgy, Calendars, more than  
Rites and Ceremonies? Besides also with B. Channing upon the Preyter for the  
first Sunday in June, O Lord, why for our Sakes didst thou fast forty days and forty  
nights, yet as Gracious art thou such Abstinence, that our flesh being subdu'd to the  
Sacrifice of thy body, Godly ministrations Righteousness, and true Holiness, &c.  
How unmerciful it would be to make that Holy Preyter to bear such a fierce  
sentence, O Lord, for our Sakes didst thou fast forty Days and forty nights, give  
us Grace in such Abstinence, that we for fearing thee, and thy commandments, and  
thy Commandments, maye thy Preyter.

To conclude, we offend the same all holy and all just God, by the same sins  
our fore-fathers offended him, why should we not seek to appease his anger  
by the same Humiliations of Fasting and Abstinence as they did? we have  
peradventure less subjects to penitence than them, why not keep them in  
Injunction by the same exactiments as they have done? We need  
the same Holy Ghost our fore Elders did, why should we expect to draw  
him down upon us but by fasting and prayer, as they did? Not can our  
living in a Northerly Country excuse us, our Ancestors who lived  
under the same climate failed often and rigorously. If we expect to  
go into the same Heaven with them, we must expect to go by the  
same rough path of Christian Temperance as they went. Besides the  
abounding of all iniquity amongst us, Covetousness, Drunkenness, Gluttony,  
Lasciviousness, Pride, Malice, Shedding of Innocent blood, Profaneness,  
Perjury, Blasphemy, Infidelity, Atheism, cry aloud to Gods Vengeance  
against us, and call every devout Christian to Fasting, Weeping and  
Mourning, to prevent those temporal Judgments we may justly fear, and  
remove those spiritual plagues of Distress, Ignorance and Error, which  
we too sensibly feel. In this doth saith the Holy Prophet Esay, Chap. 23,  
V. 12, 13, 14. Did the Lord God of Hosts, call to Weeping and to Mourning,  
and to Baldness; and to girding with Sackcloth: and beheld joy and gladness,  
drinking Wine and Drunkenness. Say to them therefore, drink Wine and drinking Wine: let not one and  
drink from me now, all shall be drunk, that reviled in mine ears by the Lord  
of Hosts. Many dayes iniquity shall be purged from you till you dy, saith the  
Lord God of Hosts. The eating of Flesh and drinking Wine, when God  
Almighty calls to fasting, weeping, and mourning, is an iniquity, saies  
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the Holy Fathers which did command us to do, and what God Almighty  
Commandeth, and what he commandeth, we do, and will always do,  
according to his commandments. And if we do not, we do sin, and offend  
Worshipfull Master Jesus Christ, and his blessed Mother, and all them  
for our Souls good, who have commanded it.

Whom all that has been laid cannot perwinde to a Religious obseruation  
of the Penitential time of *Lent*. I have one reasonable request to them,  
that they would but for one year lay, as many days, out of Private Devotion,  
as they do who fast at few times and dayes, commanded by an Ecclesiastical  
Authority; and I perwinde my selfe, they would find so great spiritual  
benefit thereby, that they would clearly see, fasting being good in it selfe,  
its being commanded by our Superiors can never make it supererfluous. I deny  
not but the change of the Primitive Christian way of living, from meat  
Abstinence from flesh, by Set Fastes, fasting from one sort of meat  
and feasting upon others, making up what they wasted in meat by Wine  
and strong drinke, at meane without wine-meale, gave the first occasion  
to many simple well meaning people, to look upon all fasting as a mere  
supererflution: It being hard to conceive that ever the Apostles could appoint  
such a manner of fasting, as is too commonly practised by Professors  
to follow Apostolical Institutions in their Services. But what say you  
*Conformists*, if we must upon the Authority of the Primitive Fathers, not  
*Lent*, why then ought we not to follow the example of them, and observed  
by the same Fathers? Have the Holy Fathers a wrong commandment, when they  
reprobate the *No-fasting* of *Non Conformists*? If so, then let them tell us, when they  
reprobate the mock-manner of fasting of most of the Clergy, and of  
the Church of *Scots*? As for amissnes to this obseruation, we are bounde to  
our fault, and are resolved seriously to endeavour remeys, and according  
to our corporall and spiritual strength, Piously to emulie the primitive Christians  
fasting: And would you joyntly with us in so holy an exercize, we hope  
what our own simple knowledg is not able to prevail with our sinful Nature  
todo, your good example would shame us into the effectual performance of  
at least in some good measure. And now I hope your objection is answereid:  
and a happy solution thinke indeed, God grant. Let us lay aside, this sacred  
Penitential time, all other disputes, and let this be our good Commandement,  
who shall spend most of our time in devout prayres, and diligent reading of  
hearing Gods word; and most of our worldly wealth in charitable Alms upon  
our indigent neighbour, and lefft upon our selves in meat and drinke: Let none  
revile or injure his brother, but let our great quarrel be against our selves,  
Judging and Punishing our selves for our sins by fasting and Abstinence in  
this world, that we may not be judged and punished for them by Almighty  
God by Hell-fire in the other. By such disputes as these we shall sooner come  
to an amicable union amongst our selves, and to the happy favour of our  
common Lord and God, than by all our uncharitable unchristian Brawls and  
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